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ABSTRACT

Malay's long use as the dominant linga franca throughout modern Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore is partly responsible for its current status as the national language of all three countries. However, political and economic developments during and since the colonial era have created sociolinguistic contexts, motives, and results of the language's status that are very different for each country. In Indonesia, the policies of the Indonesian nationalists, Dutch, and Japanese converged to promote Bahasa Indonesia successfully as an ethnically neutral symbol of identity and integration. In Malaysia, the selection and promotion of Bahasa Malaysia as the national language was motivated partly by ethnic communalism rather than national unity, but it was also enhanced by British and Japanese policy. In Singapore, Malay serves to express international integration and unity with her two closest neighbors and is a factor in the balance of ethnic sentiments. The status and domains of Malay in the three countries are constantly changing and evolving, reflecting the complexities of the national language question in this area. A five-page reference list concludes the document. (MSE)

Malay in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore: Three Faces of a National Language

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short title: Malay as a National Language

MALAY IN INDONESIA, MALAYSIA, AND SINGAPORE: THREE FACES OF A NATIONAL LANGUAGE

Introduction

Contemporary Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore provide excellent examples of the diverse rationales for the adoption of a national language and for the consequences and implications of selecting a particular language for this role. For unlike other contexts in which national language policies have been compared, these countries afford a rare opportunity to analyze several sociolinguistic variables operating on a common national language, Malay, in a contiguous geographic area that has been influenced since prehistory by similar linguistic and nonlinguistic developments.

For the half millenium prior to the colonial era, this region shared Malay as a lingua franca for basically identical functions associated with maritime trade. However, significant differences in the colonial and post-colonial experiences of these countries have caused substantial divergence in their respective motives for and the sociolinguistic impact of their selection of Malay as a national language. In this survey of the national language question in these countries, I will review the historical role of the Malay language in the area, discuss the diverse reasons why Malay was selected as the sole national language in these countries, and examine the results of this solution to the national language question in all three nations.

Pre-colonial Era

The region comprising present-day Indonesia, Malaysia, and

Singapore has always been unified in terms of its indigenous languages, most of which share phonological, morphosyntactic, and lexical features marking them as members of the Western Indonesian sub-branch of the Malayo-Polynesian language family (Dyen 1971; Voegelin and Voegelin 1964).

These linguistic bonds are further consolidated by the use of one of these languages, Malay, since prehistory as the primary lingua franca of the region. As Alisjahbana observes (1976:32),

> because the extensive area of Indonesia and Malaysia is fragmented into hundreds of geographical, cultural, and most important, linguistic units, there has been from time immemorial a need for a single common language which could be understood not only by the natives of the archipelago but also by the constant waves of foreigners attracted by celebrated riches.

Malay's assumption of this role has resulted from its long use as a mother tongue on both the Sumatran and Malay sides of the Straits of Malacca, which have continually been the keystone to maritime commerce in Southeast Asia. The Malay inhabitants of this area have always been active traders and navigators, spreading their language with them at all their ports of call (Gonda 1973). Concurrently, "traders, migrants, and even pirates who plied up and down the Straits of Malacca could not escape contact with Malay-speaking people" (Asmah 1982 :202-203), whose language they subsequently learned and then used in their interethnic contacts with one another.

The first institutionalized spread of Malay occurred during the Srivijaya Empire (seventh through fourteenth centuries A.D.), which adopted Malay as its official language. From its capital at

contemporary Palembang in southern Sumatra and a secondary base at Kedah on the Malay Peninsula, Srivijaya eventually conquered all of Sumatra, West and Central Java, and the Malay Peninsula, establishing colonies along all seacoasts and major rivers within its domain. It maintained diplomatic relations with both India and China and effectively controlled both the Straits of Malacca and the Straits of Sunda (between Sumatra and Java) for over five centuries (Cady 1964; Harrison 1967; Williams 1976). The extensive area over which Malay had official status during the Srivijaya era is reflected by the widespread locations of stone monuments with Malay inscriptions in Devanagari script later found on Sumatra, Java, and the Malay Peninsula (Alisjahbana 1976; Asmah 1982). In addition to its use within the actual political domains of Srivijaya, Gonda (1973:87) surmises that the empire "in all probability, likewise furthered the spread of Malay over adjacent countries which felt its influence."

The decline from power of Srivijaya by no means lessened the role of Malay. For with the subsequent expansion of the Islamic kingdom of Malacca during the fifteenth century, the Malay spoken by sailors from the smaller islands in and around the Straits of Malacca -- a variety slightly different from that used in Srivijaya -- continued the tradition of Malay as a lingua franca in the Archipelago (Abas 1978; Williams 1976). Furthermore, Malay became the language of proselytization by Muslim missionaries who followed the trade routes and brought the language into greater contact with present-day Indonesia (Gonda 1973).

By the time the first Europeans arrived, Malay was well-established as the only lingua franca in the Archipelago (Teeuw 1967). Pigafetta, who accompanied Magellan on his first circumnavigation of the world, compiled the first Portuguese-Malay glossary in 1521 while harbored at Tidore, one of the far eastern Indonesian islands, which is indicative of just how far Malay had spread. Soon afterward, St. Francis Xavier is quoted as having referred to Malay as "the language that everyone understands," and in 1614, Jan Huygen van Linschoten, a Dutch navigator, observed that "Malay was not merely known but was also considered the most prestigious of the languages of the Orient... he who did not understand it was in somewhat the same position as Dutchmen of the period who did not understand French" (Alisjahbana 1976:33-34).

Colonial Indonesia

With the advent of the colonial era, differences between the objectives and policies of the British in Malaya and those of the Dutch in the Netherlands East Indies became reflected in greatly divergent status and functions of Malay in these col es. The Dutch colonization of present-day Indonesia (1600-1942) was extremely conducive to the expanded use of Malay. Unlike the British, discussed below, the Dutch strove for monopolistic control in Indonesia and carefully guarded against foreign intrusions on their largely plantation economy. In particular,

they severely restricted immigration of other Asians, resulting in a population which was almost entirely indigenous to the islands and which had long shared Malay as a link language.

Although Dutch was initially the only official colonial language, the Dutch themselves found Malay extremely useful as an auxiliary language for local administration and for communication with the linguistically diverse peoples they sought to govern. Therefore, in 1865, Malay was adopted as the second official language by the Dutch colonial government, who used it as an auxiliary language for local administration, commerce, and communication (Hoffman 1973).

Alisjahbana (1976) posits that ease of communication was not the only motivation of the Dutch for elevating Malay to official status, as demonstrated by their use of Malay as the primary medium of instruction for non-Europeans in the colonial school system. The Dutch did provide limited Dutch-language primary, secondary, and ultimately university instruction for the children of the Eurasian and Indonesian elites, but their general policy was to restrict the number of Indonesians who were proficient in Dutch, since Indonesians who completed their secondary and higher education in Dutch often competed with the Europeans for higher positions in government and commerce and for other privileges. Therefore, the Dutch established only 250 "Dutch Native" primary and secondary schools, with Dutch as the medium of instruction, for the Indonesian elites and a small group of intellectually promising non-elites (Alisjahbana 1976:114). The vast majority

of Indonesians could attend only "Tweede Klasse" (Second Class) schools, in which the language of instruction was Malay (Nababan 1979:282; Central Bureau of Statistics 1940).

Actually, in pursuing this language policy, the Dutch contributed greatly to the modernization and standardization of Malay in Indonesia. Dutch administrators and scholars developed new registers for Malay in the many domains in which it was used; created a standardized Latin-alphabet spelling system for Malay, along with an extensive wordlist implementing this system; established a Malay-language publishing house to provide reading material on popular topics for Indonesians who had learned to read Malay in the schools; and supported a native journalistic press in Malay from the beginning of the current century (Alisjahbana 1976; Central Bureau of Statistics 1940; Nababan 1979).

However, the status of Malay was most greatly enhanced during the Dutch period through its role as a language of nationalism opposed to the colonial regime. Ironically, it was the Dutch language which equipped Malay for this function. Anderson (1966) observes that among the limited numbers of non-Europeans who received a Dutch-medium education, there developed a small group of intellectuals "without a real function within the structures of the colonial system," for whom proficiency in Dutch "opened the way to a critical conception of society as a whole, and a possible vision of a society after the disappearance of the colonial regime." Dutch "provided the necessary means of

communication between the anti-imperialist and anti-colonial critiques of West European and, later, Russian Marxism and the potential revolutionary elite in Indonesia." From Dutch political tracts, "a socialist-communist vocabulary became the common property of the entire nationalist elite of those years" (Anderson 1966:101-102).

In seeking a single language through which to mobilize the Indonesian masses by means of these revolutionary ideas, the nationalists found Dutch unsatisfactory since so few people understood it. They likewise rejected Javanese, the most highly developed indigenous language, since it was associated with the largest and most powerful ethnic group and its use could therefore lead to dissension and mistrust from the non-Javanese. Moreover, as a reflection of the highly stratified Javanese social structure, most statements in the Javanese language require choices from a complicated hierarchy of morphosyntactic and lexical constructions, depending on the relative status of the interlocutors (Geertz 1960); Javanese was thus not at all suited for the expression of notions of equality and democracy central to revolutionary rhetoric.

In contrast to Dutch and Javanese, the nationalists found in Malay an indigenous language already widely used throughout the archipelago and ethnically neutral, in not being the first language of any prominent ethnic group. Moreover, Anderson (1966:104) has observed that as the primary trade language of the East Indies,

> it was a language simple and flexible enough to be rapidly developed into a modern political language... This was all the more possible because Malay as an 'inter-ethnic' language, or lingua franca, had ipso facto an almost statusless character, like Esperanto, and was tied to no particular regional social structure. It had thus a free, almost 'democratic' character from the outset....

Thus, in the early decades of this century, the nationalists began actively promoting Malay as the best candidate for an Indonesian language, culminating in its adoption in October, 1928, at the second All-Indonesia Youth Congress in Surakarta, Central Java, as Bahasa Indonesia, "the Indonesian Language" (Alisjahbana 1976:39). In the 1930's, a genre of anti-colonial nationalist writing in Malay began to develop, spearheaded by a group of young Dutch-educated writers from Central and Northern Sumatra. Their variety of Malay, which was very similar to varieties of Malay spoken on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula, became the standard literary language for Indonesia and is still considered the standard model for education and formal occasions (Stevens 1973).

The Japanese occupation of Indonesia (1942-1945) further augmented the domains, functions, and status of Bahasa Indonesia. The Japanese abolished Dutch as the principal language of power of the Indies, hoping eventually to replace it with Japanese, which was taught as a compulsory subject in all the schools. However, the urgent wartime need to communicate quickly and clearly with the Indonesian people forced the Japanese to give Bahasa Indonesia official status in 1942 (Reid

1980) and to use it as the primary language of the islands. In their efforts to mobilize the Indonesians for the war effort, the Japanese went out to the most remote villiages, introducing Bahasa Indonesia in regions where it had never been used before (Alisjahbana 1976).

Furthermore, from early in their occupation, the Japanese entertained the possibility of granting independence within their Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere to an Indonesian nation administered from Java. Later, as Japanese defeats began to augment, an independent Indonesia figured into their strategy of an insular defense perimeter around Japan (Elsbree 1953).

In pursuit of these objectives of immediate communication and preparation of a future ally, the Japanese contributed greatly to the further cultivation and elaboration of Bahasa Indonesia. They supported increases in the number and circulation of newspapers in Bahasa Indonesia, and provided public radio stands at parks, schools, and larger street intersections for Indonesians to hear lectures and speeches delivered in Bahasa Indonesia in support of the Japanese war effort (Elsbree 1953). In addition, the Japanese established Bahasa Indonesia as the primary language of government and law; science, technology, and industry; and of elementary through university education (Alisjahbana 1976).

This increased use and importance of Bahasa Indonesia required that it be standardized throughout the archipelago and that its lexicon be enlarged to function in new domains. To

coordinate this linguistic retooling, the Japanese, beginning in 1942, established a series of language planning commissions with both Japanese and Indonesian members, whose task was to write a normative grammar, to standardize the existing vocabulary of daily usage, and to develop new terminology. By the end of the Japanese occupation, 7,000 new terms had been adopted into the Indonesian language (Alisjahbana 1976; Reid 1980).

Concurrently, a small class of urban Indonesians -- who during the Dutch colonial era had been treated as a privileged indigenous aristocracy, been educated in the Dutch-language schools, and subsequently used Dutch as their first language-- were suddenly forbidden by the Japanese from speaking Dutch and, therefore had to adopt Bahasa Indonesia as their primary language. This class, though not actively involved in the nationalist movement, had traditional status among the Indonesian population; their use of Bahasa Indonesia further expanded the domains of its use and added significantly to its prestige (Stevens 1973).

As a result of these myriad factors during the Dutch colonial period and the Japanese occupation, by the time the Japanese withdrew in defeat from Indonesia in August, 1945, the Malay language had undergone dramatic modernization and standardization, with sufficiently developed registers for government, law, education, science, and technology to function as the national language for a new nation. With virtually no opposition and no serious competition from any other language,

[illegible]. At independence, Bahasa Indonesia was adopted as the sole national and official language of the new republic of Indonesia (Alisjahbana 1976).

Contemporary Indonesia

Under Indonesia's current language policy, adopted in 1976, Bahasa Indonesia, remains the national and only official language. It is the symbol of identity and unity, the language of law and government administration, the primary medium of instruction in education, and a tool for national planning and for the development of science, technology, and national culture. In complementary distribution with Bahasa Indonesia, the regional languages are maintained for intra-regional communication and to preserve and develop local culture (Halim [illegible], [illegible], [illegible] [illegible]).

In gaining popular acceptance of Bahasa Indonesia in these roles of national and official language, Indonesia is renowned for having experienced considerably more success than have most other newly independent multilingual nations. Factors most frequently cited as underlying this acceptance are identical to those responsible for Bahasa Indonesia's appeal during the colonial period: its central role as a vehicle and symbol of the movement for political independence, its ethnically neutral status in not being the first language of any prominent ethnic group, and the freedom it provides from encoding in all

utterances distinctions in rank and status (Tanner 1967; Abas 1978; Harrison 1979; Nababan 1980; Diah 1982).

Concurrent with this general acceptance, proficiency in Bahasa Indonesia is becoming increasingly widespread among the Indonesian population. Reliable statistics are unavailable as to the numbers of Indonesians who could speak Bahasa Indonesia during the Dutch and Japanese colonial eras or even at the time of Indonesia's independence. However, recent census data indicates that general proficiency in Bahasa Indonesia is spreading very quickly. In the 1971 census, 40,250,000 Indonesians, or 40.7% of Indonesia's population, reported that they could speak Bahasa Indonesia. By 1980, this total had reached over 90,000,000, or 61% of the population (Nababan 1982; 1983).

The institution most often credited for this rapidly increasing proficiency in the national language is the educational system, particularly the compulsory six years of elementary school where the majority of Indonesians first learn and then use Bahasa Indonesia (Diah 1982; Douglas 1970; Tanner 1967). As stipulated in the national language policy, B a h a s a Indonesia is the medium of instruction in all types of schools and at all levels of education throughout the country, with the exception that regional languages may be used as the medium of instruction during the first three years of primary school while Bahasa Indonesia is learned as a second language. Moreover, Bahasa Indonesia is also the major subject of instruction in the

primary schools, being taught six to eight hours weekly for all six years, and is thereafter taught as a subject five hours per week during the three years of junior high school and at least three hours per week for the three years of senior high school (Aanenson 1979; Nababan 1982).

Besides providing access to proficiency in Bahasa Indonesia, the schools are also mandated by Indonesia's language policy to use the national language "as a means to strengthen and maintain the feeling of nationalism and unity". For example, the language arts curriculum in the secondary schools includes as writing models the nationalist literature in Bahasa Indonesia from the 1930's, mentioned earlier (Diah 1982:29).

In addition to the schools, Indonesia's education system is also increasing national proficiency in Bahasa Indonesia through an extensive non-formal education literacy program, Despite the fact that by 1980, eighty-five per cent of all elementary school age children were enrolled in schools, due largely to financial considerations (Beeby 1979), only fifty per cent of the pupils who entered the first grade were reaching the fourth grade, and only thirty-five per cent were completing all six years (Diah 1982). For these Indonesians who do not attend school long enough to acquire literacy or proficiency in Bahasa Indonesia, the national Department of Education and Culture has since 1951 provided a series of "functional literacy" programs as part of its larger system of "non-formal education" -- "organized learning opportunities outside the regular classroom" (Soedijarto

et al. 1980:50). A primary goal in these programs has been proficiency and literacy in Bahasa Indonesia in order to write letters and to read newspapers, magazines, and other publications on a variety of practical topics (Lowenberg 1984; Napitupulu 1980).

A second major reason for the increasing use of Bahasa Indonesia has been urbanization. Since independence, increasing population pressure in rural regions has led to the tripling and quadrupling of the populations of Indonesia's cities, bringing together millions of Indonesians from different language backgrounds in new neighborhoods, at work, and in the marketplace (Peacock 1973). Attitudinally, the fact that Bahasa Indonesia is not the vernacular of any one prominent ethnic group has encouraged its acceptance for interethnic communication by urban Indonesians regardless of their first languages (Tanner 1967). An East Java study of fluency in Bahasa Indonesia in the late 1970's found that while fluency was still 30.8% in the villages, it had reached 60.8% in the urban areas (Harrison 1979). In addition, children of interethnic marriages, particularly in the urban centers, often acquire Bahasa Indonesia as their first language. Nababan (1985:3) reports that whereas at the time of Malay's adoption as Bahasa Indonesia, at most 500,000 Indonesians spoke it as a mother tongue, the 1980 census revealed over seventeen million Indonesians "who can legitimately be called 'native speakers' of Bahasa Indonesia."

The use of Bahasa Indonesia is also increasing in the domain

of intraethnic communication among people sharing the same regional language as their mother tongue. Most of the regional languages of Indonesia, like Javanese mentioned above, require for any speech act careful consideration of the relative status of the participants and observers (See, for example, Glicken 1982, for a description of the Sundanese language of West Java). In urban life, new social roles are created which may differ radically from traditional status relationships in the villages. As a result, participants in an urban speech act may stand in a superior-subordinate relationship in terms of a traditional hierarchy of ascribed status, such as nobility, but be social equals in terms of a newer hierarchy of achieved status, such as education and employment. Tanner (1967:24) notes that "in such ambiguous situations...individuals can avoid the difficulties and embarrassment involved in either proclaiming their equality or acknowledging their superiority or inferiority by communicating with one another in Indonesian" (ie. Bahasa Indonesia).

A third factor responsible for increasing proficiency in and use of Bahasa Indonesia has been the broadcast media. In accordance with the national language policy, all radio and television programming except that specifically promoting local culture is transmitted in Bahasa Indonesia from regional government stations to almost 20,000 radios and 2,000,000 television receivers throughout the country (Douglas 1970; Europa Yearbook, 1982; Vreeland et al. 1975).

As the foregoing discussion has demonstrated, Indonesia's

often cited success in the selection, spread, and popular acceptance of her national language has resulted from a complex series of sociocultural, political, economic, and linguistic developments spanning more than a millenium. In Indonesia, Malay has evolved from a pre-colonial lingua franca, exhibiting considerable regional variation and functioning in a relatively restricted set of trade-related domains, into the primary shared code of over 150 million people, with widespread status and prestige, a high degree of elaboration and cultivation adequate for use in virtually all linguistic domains of the modern world, a well-developed body of literature, and sufficient neutrality with regard to ethnicity and stylistic features to serve as one of the most popular national languages in the modern world.

Colonial Era: Malaya

The development and status of Malay in Malaysia and Singapore has been considerably different from that in Indonesia, due in large part to the policies of the British during their colonization of the Malay Peninsula and western Borneo (present-day Sabah, Sarawak, and Brunei) from the late eighteenth until the mid-twentieth centuries. Permanent British presence in the region effectively began with the establishment on the Malay Peninsula of the "Straits Settlements" of Penang (1796), Singapore (1819), and Malacca (1824) in order to support the British East India Company's tea trade with China. This initial

period of British influence, in contrast to the highly restrictive immigration policy of the Dutch, noted above, was marked by large-scale immigration of Hokkien-speaking Chinese to the Straits Settlements, where they soon became the majority populations of Penang and Singapore (Platt, Weber, and Ho 1983). As will be seen, this concentration of Chinese in the coastal cities profoundly affected the future political, economic, and sociolinguistic development of the region.

In the 1870's, the British began to expand their influence more vigorously in the region until, by the end of the early twentieth century, they administered with varying degrees of direct control all of the Malay Peninsula and the crown colonies of Sarawak, Sabah, and Brunei on western Borneo (Vreeland et al. 1977a). Concurrent with this increasing British influence came further large-scale immigration to the region of Chinese and South Asians, the former to work in tin mines being opened in the interior of the Malay Peninsula, and the latter to develop rubber and coffee plantations and to construct a railroad (Hua 1983). Thus, by the time of its first census in 1911, the colony of Malaya had an extremely pluralistic society, including 1.5 million Malays, over 900,000 Chinese, and 267,000 Indians (Vreeland et al. 1977a). The predominant languages spoken by this diverse population included Malay; Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese, Hakka, and Hainanese as the primary Chinese languages; and Tamil as the most widely used South Asian language, in addition to Malayalam, Telugu, and Punjabi (Platt and Weber

1980).

Another major difference between the British and the Dutch colonial policies was in the British provision of training in the principal colonial language of power, English, for large numbers of the non-European population. Actually the initial British policy with regard to access to the principal European language of power was very similar to that of the Dutch. Training in English and English-medium education was provided only to heirs of the royal and aristocratic Malay families to prepare them for employment as minor officials in the colonial civil service and the state governments (Vreeland et al. 1977a). Knowledge of English was not made available to the masses since, as explained by one of the British residents (in Platt and Weber 1980:6),

> I do not think it is advisable to attempt to give the children of an agricultural population an indifferent knowledge of a language that to all but the very few would only unfit them for the duties of life and make them discontent with anything like manual labour.

Furthermore, in accordance with a policy of "divide and rule," the British encouraged communal division of the non-Europeans along ethnic lines and did not wish to supply them with common proficiency, and thus potential power in colonial affairs, in English (Hassan 1975). Instead, the British used Malay, already well established as a lingua franca in the region, for some official purposes, requiring colonial officers to be proficient in Malay and, when necessary, employing interpreters, particularly Indians, who spoke both English and Malay

(Alisjahbana 1976; Vreeland et al. 1977a).

However, as the volume of their mercantile trade expanded, in contrast to the more stable plantation economy of the Dutch, the British began to need a cadre of English-educated non-Europeans as an infrastructure of officials, business agents, and clerks. Hence, as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century, the colonial government established in the Straits Settlements and in other urban centers English-medium schools, where English was taught and then used as the medium of instruction and for other school activities. The students in these schools came from the more prosperous and prestigious families from all ethnic groups, especially the Chinese and Indians, whose parents wanted them prepared for entry into government service, positions in trade and commerce, and the professions (Platt, Weber, and Ho 1983). Malay-medium schools were also established; however, due to insufficient resources and trained personnel, instruction was greatly inferior to that in the English-medium schools (Alisjahbana 1976). Most secondary schools were conducted in English, as was instruction at Raffles College and at the Singapore Medical College (Platt and Weber 1980; Vreeland et al. 1977a).

Largely as a result of these English-medium schools, the use of English continually increased during the colonial era, almost totally replacing Malay at all levels and in most domains of government, including administration and the legal system, domestic and international commerce, and transportation and

communication (Platt and Weber 1980).

More significant for the status of Malay in contemporary Malaysia and Singapore, English also became the language of power and prestige among the urban non-European elites throughout the colony, particularly as the primary code for interethnic communication among the Chinese, Indian, and Malay elites who attended the English-medium schools and then continued to use English in a wide variety of domains as adults (Platt and Weber 1980; Vreeland et al. 1977a). By the end of the colonial era, English had become "a lingua franca among the more educated sections of the community" (Le Page 1962:133).

A final factor leading to the lesser status of Malay in colonial Malaya than in colonial Indonesia was the Japanese occupation. As in Indonesia, the Japanese initially attempted to promote the Japanese language among the occupied population, only to discover that the population could not learn the Japanese language quickly enough to sustain the war effort. However, whereas Malay had been sufficiently developed under the Dutch to be adopted by the Japanese as an official language in Indonesia, the emphasis on English in British Malaya had left Malay linguistically unequipped for use in modern domains. Hence, the Japanese were forced to reinstate limited use of English, which they had originally prohibited, or else "the administrative structure of Malaya, which they had so hastily set up, would simply collapse like a deck of cards" (Chin 1946:156; Cheah 1983).

In addition, while the Japanese supported the development of

Bahasa Indonesia as a step toward Indonesian independence, they never seriously considered independence for Malaya, most of which they considered economically and politically backward. Instead, the Japanese intended to rule the Straits Settlements directly, with the remainder of Malaya administered from Singapore as a protectorate (Akashi 1980; Elsbree 1953).

Thus perceiving no possibility of using Malay for communication or need to develop it as the official language for a future independent ally -- their motives for supporting Bahasa Indonesia -- the Japanese put little effort into the promotion of Malay in Malaya. By the end of the Japanese occupation, in contrast to the numerous functional domains for which Bahasa Indonesia had been modernized and standardized, the functions of Malay in the former British territories were still extremely restricted.

Post-Colonial Malaya

Nevertheless, in 1957, at the time of its independence from the British (who had regained colonial control after World War II), the Federation of Malaya, consisting of the Malay Peninsula except for Singapore, adopted not English but Malay as its sole national language. Ostensibly, this selection resulted from two considerations: (1) a desire to have an endoglossic language, for which Malay was the most widely used candidate, as a symbol of and vehicle for national identity and integration; and (2) the fact that when the British withdrew, only the ten per cent of the

population who had comprised the non-European elites during the colonial era could speak English (Hassan 1975; Le Page 1962).

However, an equally important and explicitly formulated goal was to accord favored status to the Malays, the largest and therefore potentially the most politically powerful ethnic group, in their economic competition with the descendants of the Chinese and Indian immigrants. These non-Malays -- especially the Chinese by virtue of their concentrations in the urban coastal centers, where they had long been using English -- had during the colonial period gained a significant economic advantage over the Malays (Le Page 1962; Vreeland et al. 1977a).

Nonetheless, the formulators of this language policy also recognized the continued importance of English as the only language in post-World War II Malaya that was linguistically equipped for the myriad functions of a modern nation. Hence, a policy was devised for both Malay and English to have official status until 1967, a ten-year transition period during which Malay was to be taught intensively and modernized so that it could serve as the sole official language and medium of instruction in the schools (Platt and Weber 1980; Vreeland et al. 1977a). Two government agencies were established to help achieve this goal -- a Language Institute, to train educators from all ethnic groups to teach in Malay, and the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (the "Language and Literature Agency") to prepare Malay-language textbooks and teaching materials, produce a standardized Malay dictionary, coin and adopt new words for the lexical

modernization of Malay, and promote the use of Malay among the general population (Le Page 1962).

However, beyond establising these agencies, the government took few firm steps to implement this goal, relying instead on "persuasion" to have Malay replace English over the allotted ten years (Hassan 1975:3). As a result, there occurred a "linguistic drift toward English," which provided "the main avenues to higher education and economic advancement" (Le Page 1962:142). Prestigious scholarships to universities and training institutes in the British Commonwealth and in the United States were available exclusively to candidates with a high proficiency in English. Similarly, only those who could functionally use English were eligible for the best employment, both within and outside Government service (Le Page 1964).

Not surprisingly, the majority of Malayan students continued to be enrolled in English-medium schools. In fact, the percentage of the total enrollment from all ethnic groups in government subsidized secondary schools who chose English as the medium of instruction increased from 61.0% in 1956 to 84.4% in 1964 (Platt and Weber 1980). Even among the ethnic Malays, Le Page observed in the early 1960's (1962:141),

> fairly keen competition, among those Malay parents who are ambitious for their children, to get them into English-medium schools, and indeed the Malay elite are still educated at schools such as Malay College where the teaching is wholly in English.

Contemporary Malaysia

What ultimately catalyzed more vigorous implementation of the language policy was a dramatic rise in ethnic communalism that developed in the region during the 1960's. A major source of tension, discussed in detail below, was Singapore's political unification with the Federation of Malaya, Sabah, and Sarawak in an expanded nation of Malaysia, followed only two years later by Singapore's secession from the new polity. In addition, developments on the Malay Peninsula -- including an economy greatly weakened by declining rubber prices and discontent among the Malay elites at the slow pace with which their economic condition was improving relative to that of the Chinese Malaysians -- further threatened the stability of the ethnic concord essential to Malaysia's survival, culminating in serious Malay-Chinese riots in the late 1960's (Hua 1983; Vreeland et al. 1977b).

In an effort to appease the Malay plurality in the population and to diffuse ethnic tensions by promoting Malaysian identity, the Malaysian government in the second half of the 1960's began to take more determined steps to strengthen the position of Malay, which it renamed a more ethnically neutral Bahasa Malaysia (literally, the "Malaysian Language"). In 1967, a revised National Language Act specified Bahasa Malaysia as the only language for most official documents and publications, and as the primary language for use in Parliament and the courts; furthermore, it required passing a proficiency test in Bahasa Malaysia for promotion in government service. In 1969, the

Ministry of Education initiated a policy whereby all English-medium schools changed to Malay-medium in the first year of primary school; thereafter, on a year-by-year basis English-medium was replaced by Malay-medium instruction until by 1983, virtually all primary and secondary education nationwide was conducted in Bahasa Malaysia. In 1970, Universiti Kebangsaan became the first totally Malay-medium tertiary institution. At present, in other universities, Bahasa Malaysia is being used increasingly in lectures and course examinations, and all candidates for admission to government-supported higher education are now required to pass entrance tests in Bahasa Malaysia (Chee 1980; Asmah 1979; Platt and Weber 1980).

Advocates of this language policy claim that it has met with considerable success, pointing out that Bahasa Malaysia is now spoken by over 80% of the population, whereas only 44% were proficient in it in 1970 (Asmah 1979). In addition, they observe, Bahasa Malaysia is being used increasingly via code-mixing and code-switching in interethnic communication among Chinese and Indian Malaysians (Ozog 1985).

However, among those significant portions of the Malaysian population who are not ethnically Malays, there appears to be less than wholehearted acceptance of the national language. Asmah (1979:20) observes that

> the feeling is prevalent, though frequently unexpressed, that the language is still very much identified with a group; that Bahasa Malaysia is unable to transcend the narrow confines of the ethnic ideology; that the propagation of the language is

> nothing more than an attempt on the part of its native speakers to assert their superiority and heighten rivalry and competition by placing the other groups in the country at a disadvantage.

For example, Sabah and Sarawak, the provinces of East Malaysia on the island of Borneo, which joined Malaysia with Singapore in 1963, have both been hesitant to switch totally from English to Bahasa Malaysia, a reluctance at least partially due to a fear of Malay domination over their largely non-Malay populations (Le Page 1962; Vreeland et al. 1977a).

In addition, there is evidence that this language policy may not even be beneficial to the majority of the ethnic Malays. The emerging standard variety of Bahasa Malaysia, used in the national government, the mass media, and textbooks in the schools, is basically that of the ethnic Malay elites living in the capital, Kuala Lumpur, and the other population center of southern Malaysia, Johore Bahru (Le Page 1985). In contrast, close to ninety per cent of the Malays live in rural areas and speak such regional varieties of Malay as Kedah Malay, Kelantan Malay, and Sarawak Malay, many of which differ radically in their linguistic features from the standard (Rogers 1982).

These differences are augmented by considerable transfer of features at all linguistic levels, from morphology and syntax to discourse and style, which have entered standard Bahasa Malaysia through contact with Chinese, Tamil, Bahasa Indonesia, and especially English via the usage of the urban Malay elites (Asmah 1982; Le Page 1985). A combination of interference from non-

standard varieties of Malay, inadequately trained teachers, and a dearth of teaching materials in the rural schools has resulted in rural Malay students generally experiencing more difficulty in mastering standard Bahasa Malaysia than do the urban non-Malay native speakers of other languages "who study Bahasa Malaysia as an object in the classroom" (Le Page 1985:35). In addition, contrary to the non-formal education programs, discussed earlier, which are bringing both literacy and proficiency in Bahasa Indonesia to the rural population of Indonesia, de Terra (1983:536) claims that no such literacy campaigns are being pursued in Malaysia, and that "Bahasa Malaysia is not available to all."

This situation has caused some observers to question the basic intent of Malaysia's national language policy. For example, de Terre (1983:531) concludes that the selection and cultivation of Bahasa Malaysia as the sole national and official language has resulted largely from the pursuit of class interests by the urban Malay elites rather than a means to achieve ethnic equality and promote national unity and integration:

> the language chosen to erase the identification of one ethnic group (the Chinese) with economic and/or academic advantage is the language of another ethnic group (the Malays). Within that other ethnic group, it is the language of one class that makes use of ethnicity to further its own class interests. [my parentheses]

The test of this conclusion regarding the role of Bahasa Malaysia as a national language will be the degree and speed with which

the rural Malays and other ethnic minorities can gain access to literacy and proficiency in the prestige variety of Bahasa Malaysia variety and thereby begin to share in the economic benefits of Malaysia's development.

Singapore

The selection and retention of Malay as the national language of Singapore has been less controversial than in Malaysia and less consequential than in either Malaysia or Indonesia. Whereas the status of Malay in Malaysia and Indonesia has resulted from a number of intranational factors, Singapore's selection of Malay was originally and still is motivated by largely international socioeconomic and political concerns.

Singapore was first granted a degree of self-government in 1959; however, out of concern for their economic and political security following the eventual complete withdrawal of the British, Singapore's leaders had begun proposing unification with the Federation of Malaya as early as 1957, the year in which the Federation became independent. Malaya was initially reluctant to merge with Singapore due to the latter's Chinese population at the time of 1.1 million, a legacy of the previously discussed immigration patterns of the Chinese during the colonial era. These Singaporean Chinese, if added to Malaya's 2.3 million Chinese, would cause a new, combined state to have a larger Chinese than Malay population (Vreeland et al. 1977b).

In order to convince Malaya that unification would not present a threat to the Federation's already fragile interethnic stability, Singapore in 1959 adopted Malay as its single national language and the primary medium of instruction in its schools. That this policy was motivated by the desire for unification with Malaya is indicated by an official language policy statement at the time which argued that granting this status to Malay "will help us to cross the Straits of Johore [separating Malaya and Singapore] into the Federation" (cited in Gopinathan 1974:34).

This policy was by no means empty rhetoric. For the next five years, Singapore did more than Malaya to promote the status of Malay, including (Gopinathan 1974)

> the provision of a subsidy to the Adult Education Board to conduct Malay language classes, the making of the study of the national language compulsory in the schools, (and) the requirement that confirmation in posts of the Civil Service was dependent on civil servants passing the government's national language examination (p. 40)... Special courses were run to meet the demand this made on teachers, and in order to encourage the development of the language itself the government established the National Language and Culture Institute (p. 34)

A year earlier, an official "special policy" had already been adopted toward the Malays, "motivated both by a desire to alleviate backwardness and to improve by a pro-Malay policy the chances of merger of Singapore with Malaya" (Gopinathan 1974:40). This policy was made explicit in a 1958 "Constitution-Order in Council" that it would be "the deliberate and conscious policy of government to recognize the special position of the Malays, who

are the indigenous people of the island and most in need of assistance" (cited in Buss 1958:54). Toward this end, Malay students were offered free primary, secondary, and university education; additional scholarships and other financial support; free textbooks; and special transportation allowances (Gopinathan 1974).

These policies regarding the Malay language and its native speakers appear to have enhanced Malaya's confidence that political merger with Singapore could succeed. In addition, concern over a strong left-wing political movement in Singapore that had been steadily growing since the mid-1950's further motivated the Malayans to unite with Singapore in order to avoid ultimately having a Communist Chinese city-state as a neighbor. Therefore, in September, 1963, as noted above, the expanded nation of Malaysia was formed by a merger of the Federation of Malaya, Singapore, and the crown colonies of Sabah and Sarawak, the latter being included in part for their largely non-Chinese populations, which ensured that the majority of the Malaysian population would still be peoples indigenous to the region (Vreeland et al. 1977a).

However, Singapore's participation in this union was short-lived for a number of political reasons. One major ideological difference between the former Federation and Singapore stemmed from the latter's refusal to formulate a plan to make Malay its sole official language, which, as discussed earlier, the Federation had already done at its inception. A critical domain

of this policy division was the educational system, in which Singapore declared no intention of converting to a system of all Malay-medium schools from its four "streams" of schools, each with a different primary language of instruction -- English as the colonial legacy, and Malay, Mandarin, and Tamil as options for the major ethnic groups (Gopinathan 1974). Another source of conflict was dissatisfaction among a large sector of Singapore's population concerning their deliberate under-representation in the lower house of the Malaysian Parliament, a condition which the Federation of Malaya had demanded in order to maintain the delicate balance of power between Malays and Chinese. These differences quickly exacerbated tensions throughout the Malay Peninsula, leading to ethnic riots in Singapore in 1964, and culminating in Singapore's withdrawal from Malaysia as an independent nation in August, 1965 (Gopinathan 1974; Vreeland et al. 1977b).

Despite these interethnic conflicts, at the time of its secession from Malaysia, Singapore's leaders elected to retain Malay as the sole national language. In so doing, their motives, as in their original adoption of Malay, were again largely international, particularly to promote cooperation and good will with Singapore's Malay-speaking neighbors, Indonesia and Malaysia. Had intranational concerns been of primary importance, other languages would have been more logical candidates. Given an over seventy-five per cent Chinese population speaking a large range of Chinese languages, Mandarin as a neutral, pan-Chinese

tongue would have been one possible choice. However, the continued presence of highly vocal left-wing political parties was already a matter of considerable concern among the vehemently anti-communist governments of Indonesia and Malaysia, a distrust which might have been aggravated by giving national status to the dominant language of the People's Republic of China. Another possibility for the national language was English as the predominant interethnic link language of Singapore's colonial period. However, selection of English could likewise have been construed by Singapore's neighbors as reflecting identity of interests with foreign powers. Thus, largely as an expression of solidarity with Indonesia and Malaysia -- with whom Singapore has subsequently entered the Association of Southeast Nations (ASEAN), as well as joined forces in several bi- and trilateral projects -- Singapore has maintained Malay as its sole national language (Kuo 1977).

Nevertheless, since independence, the status that Singapore has accorded to Malay has never approximated either its association with the ethnic Malays or its functional significance prior to Singapore's joining and seceding from Malaysia. National policies have consistently been formulated without particular attention to the interests of the ethnic Malays (Gopinathan 1974; Vreeland et al. 1977b). Similarly, the domains reserved solely for Malay as the national language have been greatly diminished to largely ceremonial functions: the national coat of arms, the National Anthem, military commands, and

protocol rituals at official functions (Kuo 1977; Llamzon 1978). In all other domains controlled in any way by the government, including the education system, Malay shares status as an official language with Mandarin, Tamil, and English. The intent of this multilingual policy, as it already was in the school system before independence, has been to promote the three non-European languages in order to maintain ethnic identity and cultural diversity, while using English in the domains of administration and law, in interethnic communication, and in international commerce in the world's fourth busiest seaport (Vreeland et al. 1977b).

Since the promulgation of this policy, the most noteworthy development in language status in Singapore has been not this diminished importance of Malay, but a largely unforeseen increase in the use of English. Initially intended to function in a largely auxiliary capacity, English is rapidly becoming the most widely used language in several linguistic domains. In the domain of employment, much intra-governmental communication and correspondence is conducted in English (Platt and Weber 1980); English is the only language used in interviews for government positions and is crucial for advancements in employment with the Singapore civil service (Tay 1982). In the private sector, both large and small businesses are increasingly using English as one or the only language of intra-office communication, particularly at management levels (Platt and Weber 1980). With the exception of some Chinese firms, job interviews are conducted in English,

and once hired, employees' competence in English is an important criterion in their promotion (Tay 1982). In addition, English-educated employees consistently earn higher monthly incomes than do employees of the same age and level of education who have been educated in other languages of instruction (Kuo 1977).

In the Singapore school system, Malay, Mandarin, Tamil, and English continue to share equal status as official languages of instruction, in that parents can choose to send their children to Chinese-, Malay-, Tamil-, or English-medium primary and secondary schools. However, owing to the importance of English in the domain of employment, the percentage of primary and secondary students, from all ethnic groups, enrolled in English-medium schools increased consistently from 31.6 per cent in 1947 to 71.3 per cent in 1976 (Platt and Weber 1980). This trend has accelerated since developments in 1975 made university education in Singapore available only in English; by 1980, 84.5 per cent of elementary school pupils were being taught in English (Le Page 1984).

This increasing enrollment in English-medium schools has occurred despite frequent pleas by government leaders for parents to enroll their children in other language medium schools, appeals motivated by a concern that Singapore's rich linguistic and cultural heritage may be erased by the dominance of English. However, as Singapore's bilingual education policy allows all children to use the mother tongue of their ethnic background as a second medium of instruction for selected subjects, Kuo

(1977:22) observes that the option of sending their children to English-medium schools "becomes easier for the parents because they can now send their children to English schools for economic advancement without any guilty feeling of betraying their ethnic tradition."

A related consequence of this increasing use of English in the schools and on the job has been a rise in the use of English in informal conversation. During the colonial era, as discussed above, English had already become an important code for interethnic communication, especially among the educated sector of the population. A more dramatic development since Singapore's independence has been the widespread use of English for intraethnic conversation among all ethnic groups. In these cases, English is often mixed and switched with other languages when speakers wish to signal their status, education, or a change in register (cf. Lowenberg 1985; Platt and Weber 1980; Richards 1982).

The increasing use of English in Singapore is also reflected in other domains, including rising circulations in English-language newspapers and magazines and growing percentages of English-language programming and advertising on radio and television (Platt and Weber 1980). These trends, together with the patterns of English use just described, have led some observers, such as Llamzon (1978:92), to argue that English is rapidly becoming not only the most widely used of Singapore's

official languages, but also the replacement of Malay as Singapore's de facto national language.

Nevertheless, a great many Singaporeans continue to be proficient in and use Malay. Kuo (1980) reports statistics that among all Singaporeans who were fifteen years or older in 1978, Malay was the major Singapore language in which the largest percentage (67.3) claimed to be competent, followed by English (61.7 per cent) and Mandarin (63.9 per cent). This higher competence in Malay than in the other official languages was found to occur among Malays, South Asians, and Chinese.

Of the individual ethnic groups, 99.8 per cent of the Malays claimed competence in Malay -- the highest mother-tongue retention rate in Singapore (Kuo 1978a). Subsequent data from the 1980 census indicated that 97.7 per cent of all Malays five years of age or older used Malay as the principal language of the home (Tay 1985a). These high rates of retention and use of Malay by the Malays have been attributed to their being Singapore's most homogeneous group, both linguistically and ethnically (Tay 1985a), and to their indigeneous status in the region, making them the "host culture" and less likely to assimilate with the groups whose ancestors immigrated during the colonial era (Kuo 1978a:87).

Malay is also frequently used by many South Asians, of whom 97.4 per cent claimed competence in Malay in 1978 (Kuo 1980). Within this group, the 1980 census indicated that 9.3 per cent use Malay as the primary language of the home (Anderson 1985), a

percentage which may be considerably higher among the 36 per cent of the South Asians whose mother tongue is not Tamil.

With regard to the future, recent studies predict the continued use of Malay in Singapore. Data from the 1980 census indicate retention of Malay by the Malays and by those South Asians for whom it is the principal language of the home. Anderson (1985:93) finds "a very strong pattern of maintenance" across the current three generations living in most Malay families. In fact, Tay (1985a) reports much higher use of Malay as the primary language of the household among younger (ages 5 to 24 years) than older (over 24 years) Singaporeans, and a tendency (81.9 per cent) to listen to Malay-language radio programs among Singaporeans for whom Malay is the primary home language. She concludes (Tay 1985a:16) that

> of all the languages and dialects in Singapore, Malay appears to be the one language that will continue to be used as the principal home language by those who (currently) use it... It is unlikely to be superseded by another language, such as English [parentheses mine]

Another factor that Tay (1985b) suggests may contribute to the continued acquisition and use of Malay by Singaporeans is the increasing employment, as Singapore's standard of living improves, of Malay and Indonesian women as caretakers in child-care centers and as live-in "amahs" (baby-sitters) or maids in Singapore households of all ethnic groups. Tay posits (1985b:8) that the caretaker language spoken by these women "will influence

a person's use of language in childhood much more than the traditionally defined mother tongue."

Beyond the domain of the home, a study by Lim (1980:26) revealed that in Singapore's bilingual education policy, in which, as noted earlier, students select their second language of instruction, "Malay is the most popular second language in that there were Chinese, Indians, and other races learning it rather than their own native language in school."

Evidently, the language situation in Singapore is still very much in flux. Although the over-all dominance of English in employment and education appears likely to continue in the foreseeable future, there are several indications that Malay is far from dying, and will likewise continue to retain considerable status in a number of domains.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, Malay's long use as the dominant lingua franca throughout present-day Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore is at least partly responsible for its current status as the national language of all three of these countries. But equally significant have been political and economic developments during and subsequent to the colonial era, developments that have created sociolinguistic contexts in which the motives for and the results of Malay's obtaining this status have diverged considerably.

In Indonesia, the acceptance and use of Bahasa Indonesia as an ethnically neutral symbol of national identity and integration has been so successful as to be the envy of the multilingual world. Credit for this development, however, belongs not only to the vision of the Indonesian nationalists who first promoted Malay for this role, but also to the language policies of the Dutch and Japanese who, motivated by practical concerns of self-interest, encouraged the use of Bahasa Indonesia and contributed crucially to equipping it to serve as an official language in support of the national system.

In Malaysia, the selection and promotion of Bahasa Malaysia as the national language has been motivated at least in part by ethnic accommodation rather than national unity, a situation which has greatly impeded the acceptance of the national language. Yet Malaysia's difficulties can likewise be attributed at least partially to the Independence and language policies of the British and the Japanese, particularly the former, which have left Malaysia with two ethnic populations of almost the same size and no neutral language as a viable option for compromise.

In largely Chinese Singapore, Malay as a national language appears to have little connection with international identity, but rather serves to express Singapore's international independence and unity with her two closest neighbors. The increasing dominance in Singapore, of course, is the continually increasing dominance of English, once again a legacy provided, especially to the Chinese, by the British colonial

policies. Concurrently, the comfortable demographic superiority that the Chinese enjoy, which likewise results from British immigration policies, protects Malay from being perceived as the vested interest of an ethnic rival, with the result that Malay continues to flourish in interpersonal domains.

Meanwhile, the status of and domains served by the languages of these three multilingual countries are far from static. In Indonesia, Malay was originally selected in part to offset the traditional dominance of the Javanese. However, since independence, as positions of power have tended to be occupied by the Javanese, Bahasa Indonesia has been altered by substantial transfer from Javanese at all linguistic levels, occasionally provoking concern among other ethnic groups that the neutrality of the national language is being eroded (Abas 1978; Stevens 1973). Concurrently, Malaysia has found that its long dependence on English, both domestically and internationally, cannot be eradicated as easily as had been hoped in the late 1960's, and a concerted push to upgrade English in recent years (Le Page 1984; Rogers 1982) may dilute the linguistic hegemony that Bahasa Malaysia has enjoyed for the past decade. In Singapore, the government for several years has been attempting to promote the use of Mandarin among the Chinese, partly in an effort to balance the dominance of English (Le Page 1984). To the degree that this campaign is effective, official interest in Malay may revive as well. Kuo (1978b) reports that the Singapore government has been considering participation in on-going joint Malaysian-Indonesian

language planning activities toward the standardization and modernization of Bahasa Indonesia and Bahasa Malaysia.

In sum, as elsewhere in the world, the contexts of language use in the Malay Archipelago are constantly evolving and changing. As they do, the status and functions of Malay in the region will likewise continue to shift with other linguistic and non-linguistic developments and thereby shed further light on the many complexities of the national language question.

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